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Magic and superstitions beliefs even today permeate the everyday lives of the Magyar peasants, and they have remained long after other aspects of their life have changed. They will go when urban culture and enlightenment have been adopted completely, but this is still for the future to demonstrate. It is reported that today the peasants who drive the tractors on the kolkhozes will not begin work without a little magical ritual which they learned from their fathers and which aims at assuring them a better crop.

Historically, the most important elements in Magyar folk customs are those which have their roots in primitive dramatic [585] performances and rites inspired by magical beliefs. These customs are full of dramatic symbolism as in the case of the bride who, when entering her husband's house for the first time, is seated and [844] a curly-haired baby is put in her lap. Women in difficult labor are prescribed per analogiam a walk around the trough. Some of these customs involve beating people, noise-making, feasts, competitions, fights and jumps deriving from ritual dances; e.g. in some communities the herdsmen have to pick up their yearly pay from the ground standing and jumping on one foot: this is supposed to

844 The mother delivers her child lying either in bed, or in some parts of the country, on the floor, the latter method being general as late as the middle of the last century. The woman in confinement [608] is considered to be unclean; for this reason her godparents are in charge of feeding her and she is supposed not to cook or to perform other household duties. This custom survives in some parts of the country only in the form of the komatál, 'the godparents' dish,' now merely a gift of victuals extended to the young mother.

842 Birth control, although frowned upon by the Catholic Church, is more or less general among the peasants. In most cases, it results from simple economic considerations, whereby the financial position of the family determines the number of children they can afford. Birth control, however, assumes the character of a popular institution in some regions of the country, as the Ormánység, Sárköz, the southern shores of the Danube, Göcsej, Őrség, Tiszazug and the valley of the river Garam, where the egyke, the policy of a single child, is the social norm. Arguing beyond the economic hardships suffered by the inhabitants of these regions, some authors explain the egyke as a sign of a deep-seated social unrest, a kind of revolt against the peasant way of life.

000 The belief of the Magyars in man's survival beyond the grave